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ARAB STATES - MIDDLE EAST: Heavy fighting continued in the Sinai yesterday and a major battle is shaping up between the Israeli task force on the west bank and surrounding Egyptian units. The Syrian front was relatively quiet for the third day in a row, with a virtual cessation of air activity.

Cairo and Tel Aviv continued to report extremely heavy fighting in the Sinai, but neither side provided many details. [] [] []

[] The Port Said area was again the target of concentrated Israeli air strikes, with other missions flown along the canal and against some Egyptian airfields. Egyptian air activity was limited to defensive patrols, with no detected air engagements.

The Israelis claim they have substantially reinforced their task force on the west bank, and have beaten off heavy Egyptian counterattacks on both sides of the canal, destroying 110 tanks. By early this morning Tel Aviv said it had 200 tanks on the west bank. []

[] Cairo, however, claimed it had the force encircled, and had ordered it to surrender or face annihilation. The Israelis have yet to announce how long the force will remain on the west bank.

The Syrian front yesterday had the quietest day since the war began. The only ground actions of note were some moderate artillery exchanges. The Israelis made no claims of having destroyed Arab armor, but Syria, on the other hand, said it destroyed 30 Israeli tanks and 10 armored vehicles. The Israelis evidently consider the Syrian front sufficiently stabilized to permit concentration of their resources in their delayed offensive in the Sinai.

The Israeli border with Lebanon is becoming more active. The Israelis claim that guerrilla hit-and-run actions are increasing, and the Lebanese have []

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[REDACTED] complained about mortar and artillery rounds from Israel falling on Lebanese territory. [REDACTED] reports indicate that eventually a punitive action will be taken across the border.

The Middle East News Agency announced last night that President Sadat has had three lengthy meetings with Soviet Premier Kosygin in Cairo. Moscow, however, has not yet admitted that Kosygin is visiting Egypt.

[REDACTED]

Soviet propaganda [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] continue to reflect Moscow's concern that the war might interrupt the process of detente. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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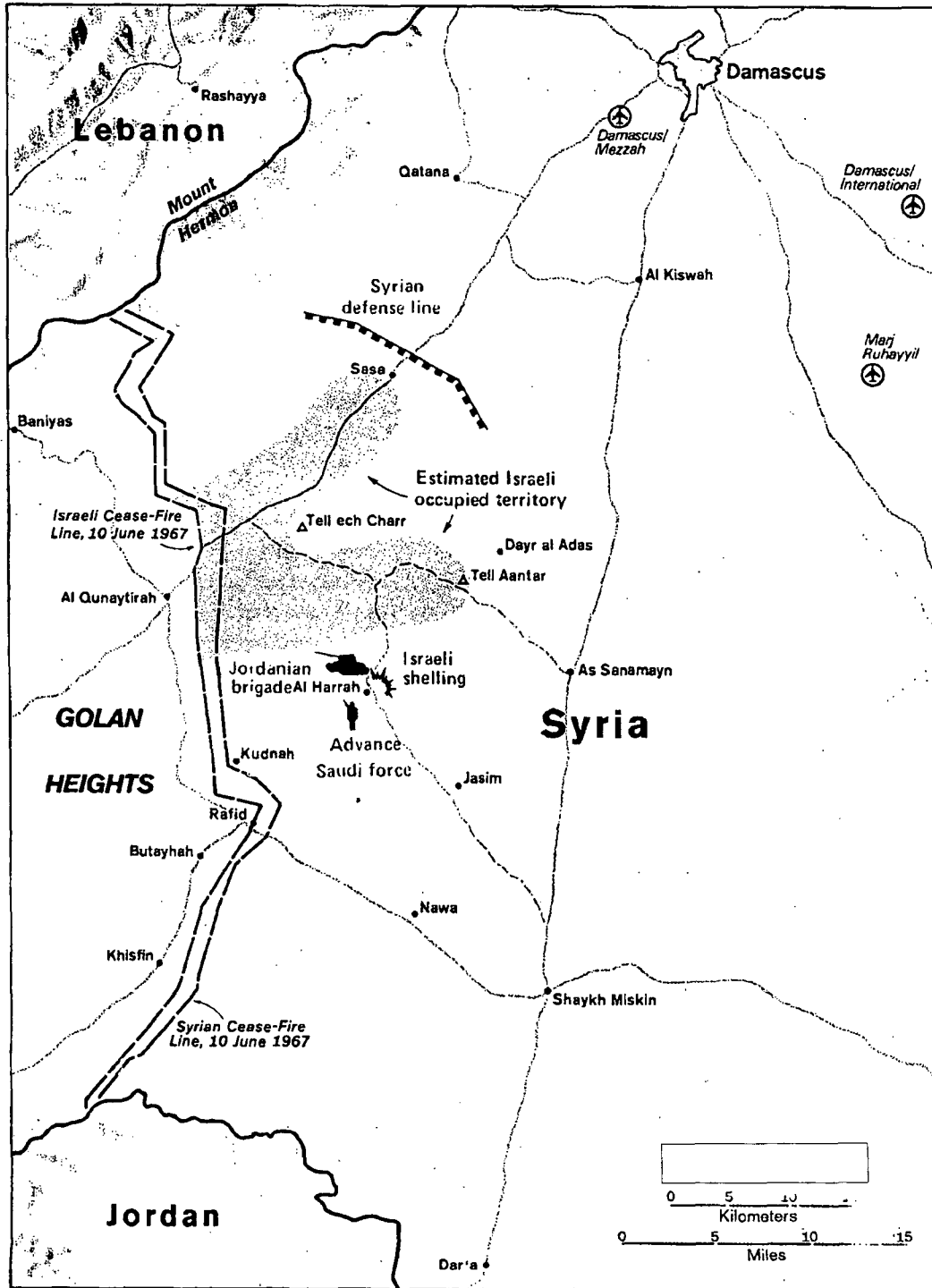
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The Syrian Front



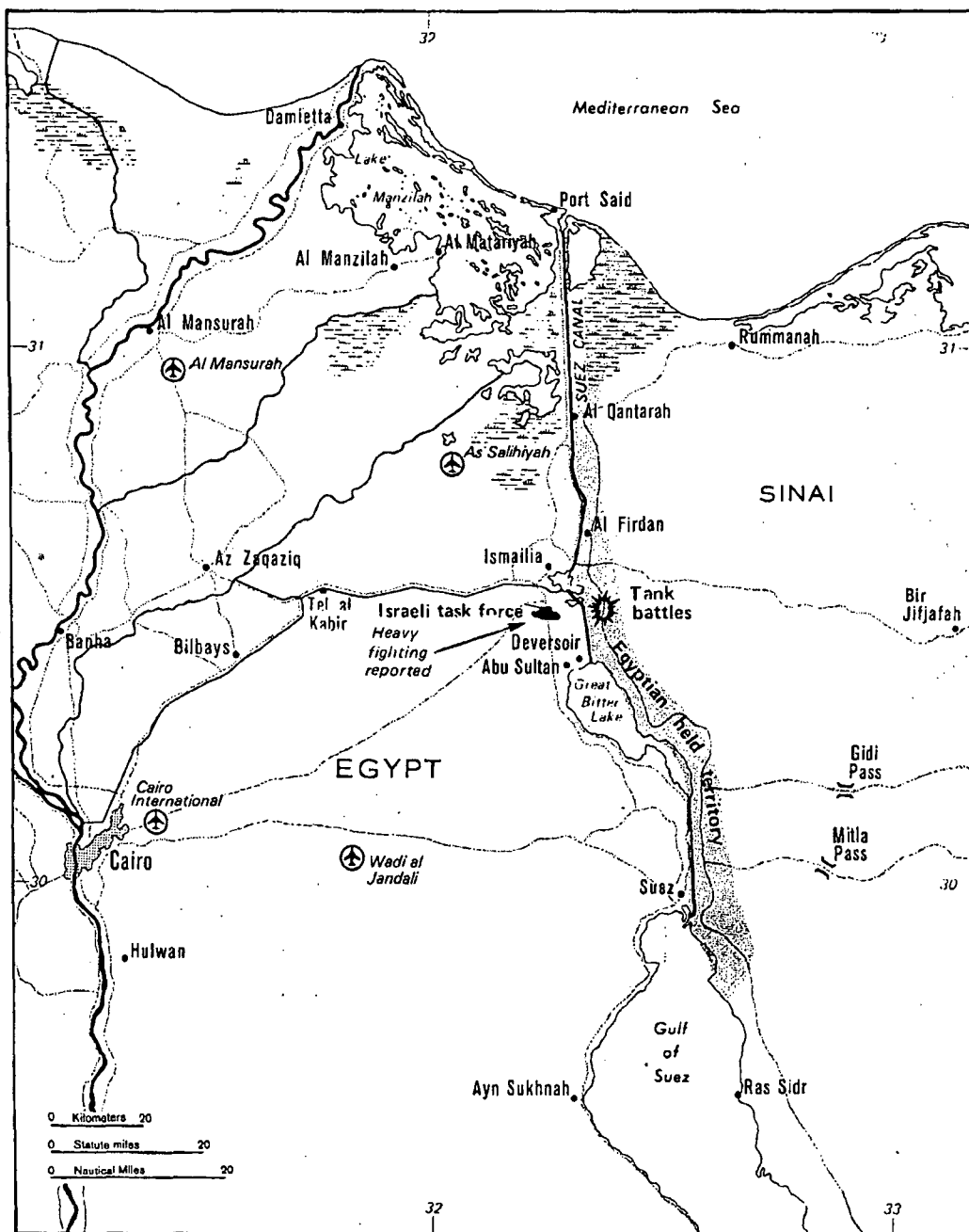
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Suez Canal Zone



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USSR-MEDITERRANEAN: The deployment of four amphibious ships to the Mediterranean on 17 October raises the number of Soviet naval ships there to 73 units. The normal Mediterranean force numbers between 45 and 50 submarines and surface ships.

The present Soviet force is made up of 27 surface combatants, including amphibious vessels and minesweepers, and 18 submarines, including four cruise missile units. The remaining force is composed of 28 logistic support ships and intelligence collectors.

The number of Soviet units now in the Mediterranean is the largest ever observed there. The increase in the number of amphibious ships improves the capability of the Mediterranean Squadron to provide logistic support to the Arabs. Despite the increase in the total number of ships, the Soviets have not added a large number of major combatants to their forces in reaction to the Middle East war. Before the fighting began there were 14 major combatants in the Mediterranean compared to the 17 that are there now. Two of the new units that came out of the Black Sea on 10 October--a cruiser and a destroyer--probably were not a direct response to the war because they had been scheduled several months earlier to visit Italy where they are now making a port call.

The Middle East fighting erupted at the time the semiannual Soviet submarine turnover was occurring in the Mediterranean. A relief group of nine submarines from the Northern Fleet entered the Mediterranean on 4 and 5 October. Turnover time normally requires about ten days, but to date only three submarines are known to have left the Mediterranean. Although the remaining six units probably will leave soon, they may have been ordered to stay on patrol because of the war.

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SAUDI ARABIA: Saudi Arabia will reduce its oil production by 10 percent through November rather than the 5-percent minimum rate agreed upon at the OAPEC meeting, according to press reports. The initial reduction of about 850,000 barrels per day will be applied to all consumers, with the possible exception of countries that follow active pro-Arab policies. Riyadh will postpone its decision on further reductions until it sees how the US reacts and whether the West European countries and Japan use their influence to change US policy on the Middle East.

The 10-percent Saudi cut may be matched or exceeded by those of some other Arab states, including Kuwait, Iraq, Algeria, and Libya. Thus, the initial all-Arab reduction will probably be between 1.4 million and 2 million barrels per day. The brunt of the cutback will fall on Western Europe and Japan, which respectively get 70 percent and 40 percent of their oil supplies from Arab sources. The Arab oil-producing states have promised to maintain oil deliveries to "friendly" countries that give Arabs "effective material help," but no major Western country--with the possible exception of France--as yet appears to fall within this category.

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